

To the Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

My name is Wendy Kravitz and I live in Guilford CT. Twelve years ago, I was one of the founders of a child care center in New Haven. My motivation to start the program was the tremendous dearth of child care openings for infants and in the city -- only 2 slots per 100 for infants. This ratio has not changed significantly in 12 years, and now threaten to decline further given the current child care environment.

The child care sector is in crisis. Many child care businesses across the state have closed. Many more have had to close classrooms because teachers and staff cannot be found.

Teachers left pre-school classrooms during the pandemic and many will not return. They have found other jobs that pay more than \$13.25 per hours which is the average pay child care teachers receive in CT. They can work at Amazon warehouse for \$15 an hour plus benefits.

We should not keep our teachers in poverty and be able to pay them more. They spend long hours lovingly helping raise our next generation! We need substantial wage supplements and benefits for our teachers.

But there is no room to raise tuition for parents who are already strapped to afford early care and education for their children. Parents need tuition supports. State funded School Readiness programs have not had a meaningful increase since 2015. Reimbursement rates must be **generously** adjusted so that child care programs are able to continue to provide **high quality** care and education.

It is a shocking embarrassment to learn that out of 36 countries in the world, **the United States ranks next to last in the support they give for child care.** It is time for that to change so parents can work, childcare program stop closing, and our youngest children's can thrive. This is the time in children's lives when the potential for brain development is the greatest.